

**HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT ADVISORY
COMMITTEE
November 16, 2011**

Present: Sara Anderson (Advocates for Children); Jane Blanshard (Disabilities); Dexter Eddy (Housing Authority); Kevin Grunwald (ex officio); Lorraine Kenowski (at large); Ethel Mantzaris (YSB); Victoria Nimirowski (WAIM); Frank Perrotti (at large); Marge Roach (McSweeney Center); Joan Terry (Commission on Aging);

Ethel called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. The minutes of the meeting of October 19th were approved, with the spelling of Mantzaris corrected.

Marge Roach, president and acting coordinator of McSweeney Center, came late last month, and expects to come today, which she did a few minutes after this announcement by Kevin. The center has received a \$10,000 grant from the Foster family, which will enable them to keep going for a while and meanwhile they are trying to get the Town of Windham to support them. It was agreed that if their representative didn't come today we would try one more time and then let it go, but she came.

Kevin announced that the Department of Human Services had taken the lead in responding to the recent snow emergency. They got the Red Cross on Sunday the day following the storm, and they got volunteers here within two hours. UConn food services again provided food. The shelter operated for eight days. There were significant case management issues, such as people who were homeless and also elderly people who needed assistance beyond immediate shelter.

Jane asked how it was publicized that you needed your own bedding. The other question was animals. The Red Cross had said that you could bring animals, but they had to be in a separate room with a person to supervise them. Kevin said there was a flyer that went out giving information. Jane asked where the flyer went. He did not know if it was in the newspaper. He said they got some bedding for some people. Jane said that in future the Dog Warden should be put in charge of the animal issue. This communication needs to be coordinated.

The shelter was closed Monday morning when only two people were left in it, after as many as 39. The department is working with the homeless boys.

Ethel said that we had been wondering if we could collaborate with McSweeney. Marge said that they had gone to the town of Windham after word had gone out that they were \$10,000 in the hole, the last council meeting of the old council. At that meeting David Foster spoke of the need for Windham to take responsibility, and presented them with the check for \$10,000. They have paid off their debt, except for a little more than \$800. Marge is meeting with the town and the transit district. Rumors that they are closing are being refuted. They expect to stay open as a regional senior center until 9/30/12. They had been restricted to dental help only from surrounding towns, which meant they couldn't use the money for bills and salaries. They are going to make a transition from regional center to a Windham center open to all. The town is investigating the possibility of incorporating the center's finances into the town's. They are also working on dealing with a long-standing loan. They want to keep the dental program, Meals on Wheels, center lunches. They have a grant for portable dental equipment to do outreach, but the equipment used up most of the money, and a new edict says that they can't go into convalescent homes. They are reworking everything. Marge feels confident that it will work out.

Joan asked about their staff. They have a bookkeeper five hours a week, dental staff, dentist and dental hygienist. They have been talking to Generations and that organization is interested in working with them. They feel that the area has a huge need for the dental program. Ethel asked if Mansfield takes advantage of the dental program and if so, do we pay. Kevin said we do pay, and Marge said Mansfield people do use the program. Marge says town now realizes that they must step up to the plate and the new council seems to have members who are very much pro-center.

Clearly, Mansfield will not have to pick up the slack because there won't be any slack. Marge feels that now that attention is being paid, there is a good chance of success in the future.

Marge announced that there would be a basket sale at the hospital the following Friday, along with a silent auction.

After Marge left, Kevin said he had seen in the minutes of the Housing Authority that McSweeney was closing. Dexter said that had been based on the rumor and that he would correct that.

Holiday Fund: Kevin said 59 families have requested meals. 20 will be provided by Storrs Congregational Church. We have a few individuals, and Karen Taylor has organized some students to help with this. There are income guidelines, and people must fill out applications. No other churches help as much as Storrs Church.

Management study: Ethel pointed out that the committee can't fulfill our charge until we get the information about other towns. Kevin passed out a list of towns he is looking at that are supposedly similar to Mansfield. He has only looked at Glastonbury, which has a huge array of services, with twenty staff in their human services department. Jane asked how that could be a benchmark for our town. Kevin says it's close in size. Jane said

not in income. These towns have similar population sizes. We will see a spectrum from Glastonbury to Ashford and Willington, but the benchmarking should give us an idea of possibilities. Kevin said he would have a time line for the whole project by our next meeting. Matt thinks he can get an intern to help with collecting this information. Kevin does not want this to drag on, and Ethel agreed that this is wasting everyone's time. Sara asked if we can do anything in the process. Kevin feels we can participate in the whole strategic planning process: deciding what services we want. This committee needs to focus on what we want to see. Sara asked if we can target something to be ready for next meeting. Ethel reiterated we can't do anything until we actually get the information. Kevin says it's the strategic planning process. Ethel asked if we hadn't done this a couple of years ago, but nothing has ever come of it. Aren't we just duplicating what we did in the past?

Victoria asked if we would ever address this in a workshop. Ethel says we must have the benchmark to know what we need to focus on.

Jane said we should be reaching out to nearby towns with which we would presumably be working. Dexter said that we need to meet with representatives of other towns to compare. Ethel said we should find out what they do and what is missing and whether we should be filling in the gaps. There may be something we are doing that no one else is doing. Jane pointed out that one example is the Coventry volunteer driver program which was finally adopted here and is working out well.

Joan said Ethel is right that we need to push this along, especially if we want to lobby for anything in next year's budget, but Kevin thinks it may already be too late for that. The question was raised about performance standards in our town. Kevin said "we do have

them and we don't", but that he will put that issue on next month's agenda.

Ethel pointed out that people probably don't know about our services because we are not publicizing them properly. Jane said we need to find some way to get the information out, and acknowledge that many people don't read the paper, so alternative methods are necessary.

Kevin said that they had recently done an in-depth survey of children's services needs and have a lot of information that we can probably use. Joan pointed out that we used to have a Mansfield reporter and extensive coverage. We need ongoing access to information about what is actually available and how to take advantage of it. We need an annual list sent to everyone in town of what services are available. Kevin said we already do that, but a number of us said we have never received it.

Dexter said he had tried to call the Community Center at two p.m. during the weekend of the storm, but only got an answering machine and no other number.

Jane asked why Bev Korba has not been notified officially that she is representing the senior center. She is no longer attending meetings because she felt like only a visitor. Kevin said he didn't know and that Paul Shapiro had urged him to include her. He said he would follow up.

Meeting adjourned at 3 p.m.

Next meeting December 21.

Submitted by,
Jane Blanshard

